

No. 4.

Price One Penny.

ONE PENNY WEEKLY.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

STANFIELD HALL.

By J. F. SMITH,

Author of "Minnigrey," "Woman and Her Master," &c.



Illustrated by Sir JOHN GILBERT, R.A.
AND OTHER EMINENT ARTISTS.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED AT THE "LONDON JOURNAL" OFFICE,
12 and 13, FETTER LANE.

With No. 1 was Presented Gratis No. 2.

1900

15

0

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1900

1

10

1

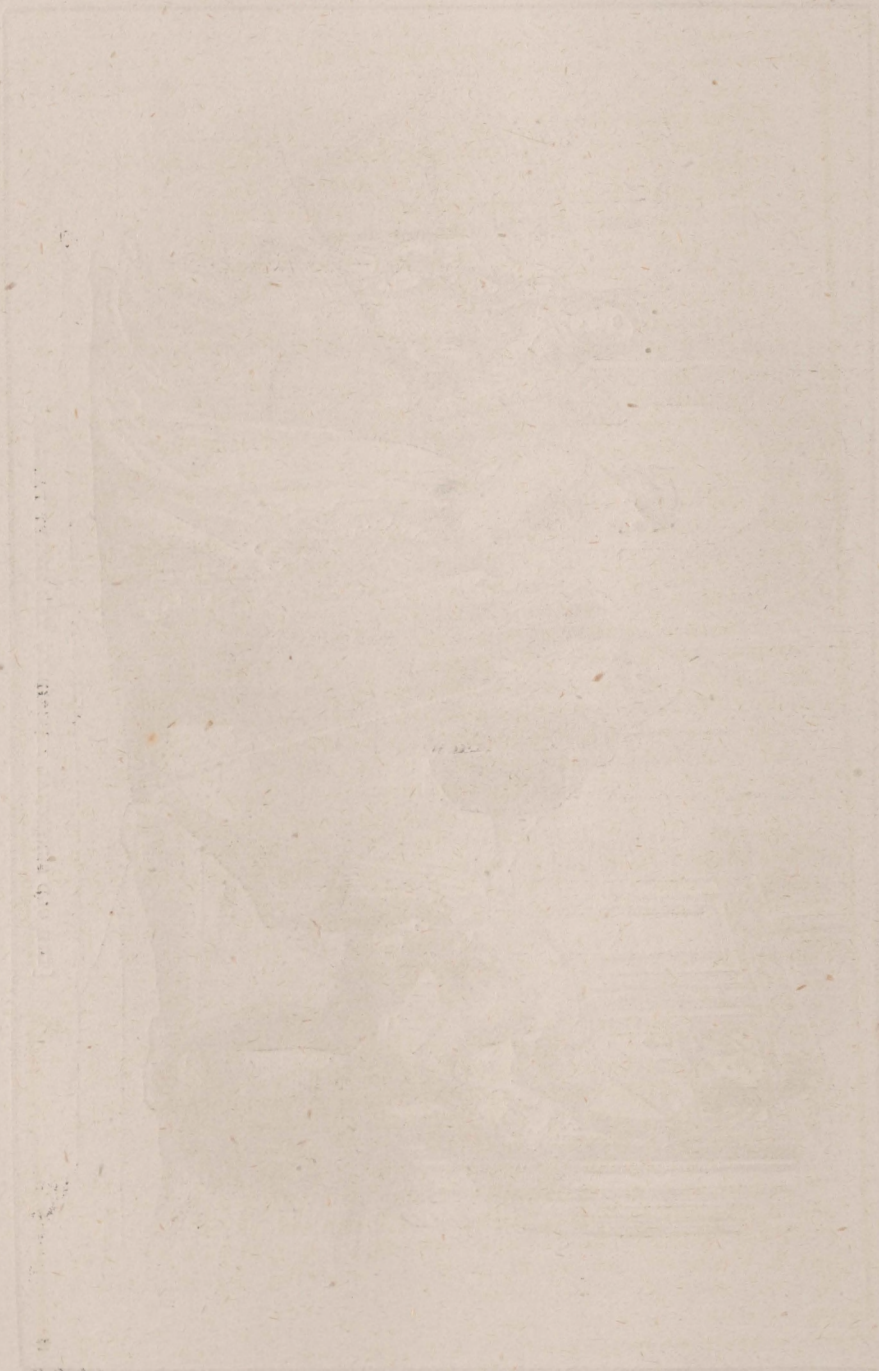
1

1

1



[THE OLD SENESCHAL DESCRIBING THE SECRET PASSAGE.]



"The combat was decided on."

"I know—I know!" muttered Herman—"they could not well refuse it. Where is the Norman bastard?"

"Safe in a dungeon of the castle, in your custody."

"In my custody!" repeated his master; "humph!—that was kind at least—and in how many days the combat?"

"Three days, my lord!" said the squire; and a look of peculiar intelligence passed between them.

"Three days," muttered Herman, as he quitted the apartment; "the time is short, but, well employed, much may be done by then."

At a later period of the day a cavalcade might be seen approaching the castle from the episcopal palace; heralds with their tabards blazoned with the arms of the Church led the way, then followed a party of priests and men-at-arms, who preceded the litter in which rode Herbert de Lozenga, the ensigns of his office as Chancellor of England being borne before him. Several of the nobles beheld his arrival with dissatisfaction; they felt indignant at the idea of his lending the sanction of his name and influence to shield the assassin of one of his own order. The greeting between them was, therefore, more of sullen respect than cordial welcome. The prelate marked their manner, but disregarded it; his courage was too high, his purpose too holy, to be influenced by the opinion of his fellow-men. Just as he passed the bridge Herman appeared, and in the name of the young earl bade him welcome, at the same time bending his knee so as to receive the Apostolic benediction; but no upraised hand, no air-drawn cross, followed the act—the piety of the bishop was too sincere to permit his lips to speak the blessing his heart could not bestow. The disappointed man rose from his knee in bitter mortification, and leading the way preceded his unwelcome guest to the late earl's private apartment, where their conversation could be carried on without interruption. Each was on his guard; the guilty one felt that a searching eye was upon him, the priest that he had to do with one a master in the art of crime, an adept in dissimulation. Herman was the first to break the silence.

"Forgive me, reverend father," he exclaimed, "if in the reception you have met with here aught has been lacking to your honour. The hand of grief is on my kinsman's house; he mourns his father lost, his friendship stained, his confidence abused, else had he shown the reverences it is my lot to offer."

"'Tis well," replied the prelate; "the cloister's shade I quitted not for the sake of man's observance or the world's vain honours, but at the call of justice and of truth. By what right have you profaned with ruffian violence our holy church, and torn the youth I cherish as a son from me, his guardian and protector? Speak."

There was a firmness, a conscious power, in the speaker's voice which grated on the listener's ear. Still he determined to yield no inch of vantage ground—the guardianship of Ulrick's person. The ring which the monk had presented to his view opened to his mind a fearful doubt; and he determined at any sacrifice to rid himself of one whom conscience clothed in the character of an avenger.

"Is it possible, my lord!" he answered with well-feigned astonishment; "would you lend the sanction of your high name to shield a murderer? The indignant earth, which drank the victim's blood, groans 'neath the homicide's polluted tread, and calls for Ulrick's life."

"I deem him innocent; men do not fall at once from virtue into the extreme of vice. I demand that he be committed to my care; my palace walls will better answer for his safety than can a dungeon here."

"You deem him innocent," iterated the franklin; "surely, my lord, you have not heard the proofs; his quarrel with the earl—his sword found near the spot."

"Something I heard of taunts and bitter jests, unmanly sneers, which sting the generous soul," gravely answered Herbert; "but nothing of a quarrel with the earl. The hour of combat is appointed. You yourself," he added with peculiar emphasis, "are witness of the nobility of Ulrick's birth. I again demand that till that hour he be committed to my care."

"Impossible," said Herman; "the proposition wounds my honour."

"And would defeat your purpose."

"Can you suspect, my lord?"

"Everything," replied the bishop, drawing himself proudly up; "Herman of the Burg, I am not one whom thou mayst trifle with; Ulrick, or thou, must with me."

"I!" faltered the astonished franklin.

"Thou! If I cannot release your victim, I can at least enchain his captor."

"This is madness!" said Herman, rising with a pride equal to the prelate's, and throwing open the doors of the apartment. "Enter, my lords," he cried, "and judge between us. Our reverend father hath declared that Ulrick must be released, or I become his prisoner."

"Prisoner!" exclaimed the several nobles as they entered; "and on what pretence?"

"Sorcery and murder!" exclaimed the deep voice of Father Oswald, who had entered with the crowd, and commenced reading from a parchment: "I cite, in the name of the most reverend Father Herbert de Lozenga, Bishop of Norwich and Abbot of Hulm, Herman of the Burg to appear before the above reverend prelate, to

answer to the charge of having sold a Christian child to the Arch-Druid Haga for human sacrifice."

All who heard shrank with horror at the charge. Overwhelmed as Herman was by it, his courage did not quite forsake him.

"Who," he demanded, "is my accuser?"

"I am!" thundered the priest; "I, Haga the Arch-Druid." Then, sinking on his knees at the feet of the bishop, he added, in a voice of deep humility, "I, Oswald the Christian."

CHAPTER IV.

THE consternation of Herman at the unexpected accusation of Father Oswald, or, as he was formally called, Haga the Arch-Druid, may be more easily imagined than portrayed; the crime of sorcery was, in the eleventh century, the most fearful that could be alleged. Society rejected the supposed criminal with horror—the Church cast him from her bosom—his children deserted him—even the sacred tie of marriage, the bond which mystically united him body and soul with the companion of his life, the mother of his offspring, became dissolved, and the wretched man stood like the genius of desolation in the world—alone.

The Norman nobles who had hitherto supported Herman drew from his side—as superstitious as they were brave, they shrank from an encounter with one whose arms were the spiritual weapons of their mutual faith—and Herbert would have met no difficulty in securing his prisoner had not succour arrived from a quarter where he least expected it. The franklins stepped forward to a man, and guaranteed the appearance of the accused before the ecclesiastical tribunal—a caution which, by the laws of Edward the Confessor, the bishop could not refuse to accept. But this unexpected unanimity on the part of the Saxons gave rise in the prelate's mind to a strange doubt.

Uncertain rumours of an intended revolt of the conquered race had indeed reached him; but nothing tangible, nothing certain. He was, however, too cautious a statesman to betray his suspicions—too experienced a huntsman to let the ban-wolf know that the hounds were on his track. Had the deceased earl been equally prudent, he might have been living still.

"Tis well, sir franklins," he said. "I accept your surety for the appearance of Herman of the Burg; but it is on one condition, and one condition only!"

"Name it—name it," cried several voices, impatiently.

"A man accused of sorcery may not be the guardian of a Christian noble; for noble Ulrick is, even by the testimony of his accuser. Resign him to my care."

"No!" exclaimed the Normans, unanimously—who, however submissive in things spiritual, bitterly resented the bishop's interference in their feudal justice—"he is a murderer!"

"Grant him such; still he is a Christian, and may not be the captive of a man o'er whom the Church suspends her awful malediction. Provoke me, and it falls on him and all who aid him in his crimes."

"Ulrick shall be our captive," replied Odo of Caen. "I will be answerable for his safe appearance on the day of battle; will that content you?"

"It must," murmured the crowd of nobles. "We will all answer with our lives and honours for his favourite's safety; we will keep faithful ward——"

"And honourable treatment?" demanded Herbert de Lozenga, who, finding he could obtain no better terms, was fain to accede.

"My word," answered Odo, "is the pledge of that; till the day of battle, Sir Ulrick shall be honourably guarded and well tended; nor friends nor foes shall have access to him. I'll hold his life as sacred as I would the blazon of my shield—the honour of my house. But his safe keeping touches our feudal privileges: my lord, we will maintain them."

The decided tone of the speaker told Herbert that all further discussion would be useless; and having, as he hoped, secured the life of his *protégé* against any possible machinations of his enemy, he resolved to appear satisfied with the concessions he had already obtained; but three days were to elapse before the day of battle, and in that brief space he had much work to do for Ulrick's safety.

"Farewell, my lords," he said; "let us not part in anger. We have each our duties to perform; judge, then, each other kindly. I leave you with every confidence in your knightly faith; Heaven will decide between us if you break it."

Every knee was bent to the earth to receive the parting benediction of the man whose arrival they had so coldly welcomed, whose reasonable demand they had so unjustly opposed. Submissive as were the Norman nobles to the Church in all things spiritual, they were jealously susceptible when it trenched upon their feudal rights; and Ulrick's cause was even slightly prejudiced in their minds by a churchman's advocacy.

A faint smile of mingled satisfaction and triumph passed Herman's lips as the train of the bishop crossed the castle bridge; but a deep observant eye was upon him, for Father Oswald, who had lingered behind his superior, read that smile, interpreted its purpose, and determined to prevent it. Instead of crossing the moat with the rest of his brethren, the monk hastily drew his cowl over his features, passed quickly to the western side of the massive keep, nor paused till he reached the angle which it formed with the chapel, the entrance to which was by a low-arched door, rich in sculptured

imagery. Satisfied that none observed him, he drew a key from his bosom, applied it to the door, and disappeared within its gloomy shade.

"The meddling churchman," exclaimed Herman, who, surrounded by his brother franklins, stood at the foot of Bigod's tower, watching the departure of the prelate, "to accuse one of my blood of sorcery! The hour is not far distant when dear he may abide it. Noble Odo," he added, addressing the Norman, who was standing near him, "what thinkest thou of yon shaveling's scheme to shield his pampered minion?"

"Each power claims its subjects," coolly answered the knight. "The sorcerer to the stake! the assassin to the block! Although I will not suffer Mother Church to interfere with my justice, I am too dutiful a son not to respect hers; aye, by my crest, and execute it too, let me but see good reason on her side."

There was something in the tone of the speaker's voice which vibrated to the very heart of Herman, and blanched his cheek with fear. He saw that the Normans, while resolute to obtain justice on the presumed murderer of their chief and brother noble, were perfectly indifferent as to his fate; nay, that they would assist, if called upon, to execute any judgment which the ecclesiastical tribunal might pronounce upon him, even though its sentence were the stake. He felt that his only chance of safety lay in the success of the insurrection to which he was so deeply pledged.

"It would require a keener sword than even Odo of Caen's," retorted Herman, "to execute a sentence that touched either my honour or my life."

The brow of the Norman became flushed, and his hand instinctively grasped the hilt of his weapon; but with a violent effort he restrained himself.

"Sir Saxon," he replied, "I will not be tempted; thou art the champion of a sacred cause. Would 'twere in better hands! But thou art its champion, and therefore inviolate."

The speaker turned upon his heel and entered the tower as he spoke, without deigning to cast a second glance on the unworthy franklin.

The first act of Odo on entering the castle was to give orders to his esquire, in whom he placed unlimited confidence, to conduct a party of his immediate followers to the tower where Ulrick was confined, and to keep joint watch with his gaolers; to accompany all who entered the prison, and to guard the life of the prisoner as carefully as he would his master's honour—a precaution, as the sequel will show, not unwisely taken, but which would have been defeated, had not an eye more vigilant, a heart more devoted than his, watched over Ulrick's safety.

Edith, the unhappy Edith, doubly widowed by the death of Hugh de Bigod, had retired to Stanfield on her husband's death.

It is true he was not the object of her early choice. The passionate enthusiasm of her young heart, the dreams which, broken once, we ne'er can dream again, were long since buried in the grave of Edward; but respect, esteem, friendship, all that her blighted feelings could bestow, the earl had long since won, and she mourned his loss—if not as women mourn the being whom they love, at least with honour and respect.

It was on the evening which closed the first day of her widowhood that she was pensively seated in the long unvisited cabinet we formerly described. Judith, her still faithful attendant, and the confidante of her sorrows, was at her side. Many and sad were the thoughts which occupied her mind. In that apartment she had listened to the first vow of love breathed into her virgin ear! It was there she had so oft received her father's blessing, tasted the thrilling pleasure of her child's caress, and there had mourned them both. Her faithful companion's words of consolation fell on a listless ear when she whispered hopes of future happiness and peace.

"Happiness!" she exclaimed; "no, Judith, no! The world knows not the word for me. All who ever loved the wretched Edith have been blighted by her fatal destiny! The gentle Edward, my kind old father, and my noble boy—all, all have perished, because they were dear to me. I am a thing accursed—a withered tree without one verdant leaf! and when I fall a stranger's hand will lay me in the grave—a stranger's foot pace through my father's halls."

The hopeless tone in which the words were spoken silenced even the well-meaning Judith, who, with the tact which affection gives, comprehended that her attempts at consolation were ill-timed.

Sinking on her knees beside her unhappy mistress, she timidly kissed her hand, and as she did so bedewed it with tears—a sympathy more eloquent and grateful to affliction than words, which wake no echo in the heart.

"Now thou art kind," Judith, she continued. "Thou hast given me tears, not hopes. I have hoped and trusted, but now I'll trust no more! The grave is our only refuge from despair, and death the only hope which ne'er deceives us."

"Religion is a better hope, my child," exclaimed the deep-toned voice of Herbert de Lozenga, who entered the apartment. "Remember, there is no state so wretched—no fate so dark—but one kind ray of mercy yet may cheer it."

At the sight of the prelate, whom a holy and important purpose had brought to Stanfield, the widowed countess cast herself upon her knees to implore his benediction, exclaiming as she did so—

"Your blessing, father, your blessing! Pour words of peace into my bleeding heart! Teach rebel nature to submit its tears, its vain regrets, and impious struggles unto His will who chasteneth where He loveth."

"'Tis thine, most noble lady; it is thine!" replied Herbert. "May Heaven endue thy soul with strength to bear the trials in its wisdom laid on it! 'Tis natural," he added, raising her as he spoke, "to mourn for those we love! Life from its cradle to the grave teaches no other lesson! But sorrow never should destroy our usefulness—never should prevent the gentle exercise of charity and mercy."

The slight tone of reproof, mingled with the earnest benevolence of the speaker, excited the attention of Edith, who misconceived, however, its tendency.

"My gold I'll freely give unto the poor. The Church hath not found me, I trust, a niggard, father."

"'Tis not the altar's streaming incense, lady—the costly offering of superfluous wealth—which forms the only sacrifice that Heaven demands! 'Tis the more active exercise of virtue, shielding the innocent, and aiding the oppressed."

"I do not understand you," replied the countess. "Point out the way my services can be of use to any! Fear not my zeal, but tax it to the uttermost."

"Ulrick," said the priest, "is innocent! Designing men conspire against the noble boy—in secret work his ruin! Your voice, lady, must be heard in his defence."

"'Tis powerless, father, here. Herman wields his kinsman's delegated rights—go, plead to him."

"To Herman," iterated the bishop; "no, lady, no! He hates the gallant youth, and with untiring vengeance still pursues him; it burns as fiercely in the villain's breast as when I snatched him first an infant from the dagger's murderous aim."

"An infant!" exclaimed both Judith and the countess, the latter of whom became pale as death at the faint ray of hope which the speaker's words let dawn upon her mind.

"Though now," resumed Herbert, "I wear the mitre on my brow, and rank and empty pomp and state are mine, when first I left the world my path was humble—a hermit's cave was my abode. To thee 'twere useless to repeat the wrongs which drove me from my native land. I was a moody, melancholy man, unloving and unloved! My ties of kindred, my ancestral rank, I cast aside; and in this distant isle sought refuge for myself. Perhaps the recluse in Windham's lonely cell was happier than the prelate in his halls."

"Is't possible?" interrupted Edith, with unfeigned surprise. "Art thou the hermit of St. Mary's cave?"

"E'en so," said Herbert, with a melancholy smile. "He whose first errand was of grief and death—he who announced the murder of thy lord—perchance his second is of peace and hope."

"Hope!" murmured his listener; "what have I on earth to hope or fear?" A glance from the prelate thrilled her very soul.

"Speak, father," she exclaimed; "you have raised thoughts that will either restore or crush me!"

"One stormy night," he continued, resuming his narrative, "a traveller, driven by the un pitying tempest, sought shelter at my cave. Nestled at his breast an infant lay, whose innocent smile had won e'en fiends to mercy. Refreshed, I left him to repose. Returning to perform a midnight penance, I beheld the ruffian aim his dagger at the infant's throat. Heaven lent me courage. I wrenched the weapon from the murderer's grasp. He fled the spot and never more returned."

"When was this?" gasped Edith.

"Twenty years ago, St. Hubert's eve," replied the bishop. "This ring," he continued, at the same time producing the ruby—whose effect upon her unworthy kinsman we have already described—dropped in the struggle, "bears the well-known crest of Herman's ancient house! Confounded at the sight of it, he hath already owned that Ulrick's birth is noble."

"It is! it is!" shrieked Edith. "Father, it was my child thy guardian hand preserved. Oh, wretched mother! to have seen my boy, yet felt no token of his presence! Had not my heart been cold, seared as the inmate's of a charnel house, it sure had leapt to meet him. Norman," she continued, casting herself at his feet, "swear thou dost not deceive me! By thine order's oath, thy mother's blessing, swear that he is mine."

"I do believe it," answered the bishop. "Haga the Arch-Druid, whom Heaven, through its unworthy servant, hath redeemed from the dark errors of his pagan creed, hath confessed he gave into Herman's hand a drug of power to steep the senses in oblivious sleep, on condition that the child should be consigned to him."

"To him! To Odin's priest!" exclaimed the excited mother. "No, no! Better that he had perished in the flames in which I had deemed him lost. It is too horrible. He could not have made a compact for my boy! Father, what have I done—what deadly crime committed—that Heaven should wreak such cruel vengeance on my sinless child?" Edith pressed her hands to her flushed brow, as if to repress the wild pulsations of its agony. Fortunately a flood of tears relieved her o'erfraught heart, which else had yielded to its wild emotions. A pause ensued, which Herbert wisely forbore to break. He beheld the mother's tears flow on with pleasure; for he knew that nature had unsealed their fountain to afford relief. "My boy—my poor, lost, persecuted boy," at last sobbed Edith, her memory slightly wandering, "could no blood but thine bedew the Druids' stone? Was there no pitying angel to protect thee?"

"Heaven hath protected him," said the prelate, in a mild, reproving tone. "Its justice smote the minister of blood. The night before the fearful compact was to be fulfilled, Haga was stretched upon affliction's couch! Chance led me to his wild retreat, where

human footsteps feared to tread. I watched, I tended—saved him. Heaven gave eloquence to my unworthy tongue, and truth prevailed. Ere many days elapsed I poured the regenerating waters of baptism on his repentant head."

"But my boy—my Edward's boy?" demanded Edith.

"Herman, no doubt, would have fulfilled his pledge to Haga, but found him raging on a bed of sickness. Wandering with his burthen in the storm, he sought my cell for shelter. You know the rest."

"I do! I do! Heaven hath heard the widowed mother's prayers."

"And doubtless will preserve him," added the prelate; "but this is the time for action, not for words. Ulrick is accused of Hugh de Bigod's death, and hath appealed unto the battle's test. Herman, his accuser is of giant strength, and skilled in cunning fence. Should his sword prevail, the block and axe will be his victim's doom."

"The block!" exclaimed Edith, starting like a roused lioness at the appalling image. "The headsman's office for my Edward's boy! I will call up the vassals of my house. I still have kindred—friends. Enslaved, enthralled, and humbled as we are, the Saxon courage is not yet so low that Norman axe should fall on a son of mine."

"Be cautious, lady; one false step may ruin all. Edda, the father of your Edward, lives, honoured and loved, the most powerful noble of the Saxon race. Seek his presence; fly to him for aid, tell him the heir of his long line yet lives. His strength will aid thy weakness, his wisdom find a clue to this disastrous maze."

It was arranged that Edith, that very night, should, under the escort of the benevolent prelate, seek the protection of the aged franklin, whose stronghold was but a few hours' ride from Stanfield. Judith was accordingly sent to give orders for the departure of her excited mistress. The faithful attendant soon returned with consternation marked in every feature. It seems that, during the interview, Herman, accompanied by a numerous body of vassals, had arrived at the holm, and learning that the prelate had preceded him, had taken possession of the hall, giving strict orders that no one should be permitted to quit the building without his permission. His conscience told him that all had been discovered; he determined, therefore, to throw off the mask, and by one bold step secure himself, if possible, against the punishment of his many crimes. His followers, as deeply implicated as himself in the conspiracy against the Norman race, applauded, and were the willing instruments of his design. He persuaded them that their schemes were all betrayed, and that if Herbert de Lozenga left the place alive, the cord and axe would be their general doom. "Let them perish!" he exclaimed; "the hunter hath fallen into the lion's lair, and prudence commands that he should die!"

It was secretly resolved that that part of the holm in which the apartments of Edith were situated should be fired, care being taken that none of its inmates escaped.

"Lost! lost!" said Edith, when Judith had concluded her report. "Fortune hath cheated me with a gleam of happiness, to make me feel my misery the stronger."

"Courage, dear lady," replied her faithful friend; "hope hath not yet abandoned us. I have heard that from this very chamber one of your ancestors, pressed by the enemy, once fled through a secret passage."

"Known but to one ancient follower of our house," replied the countess, "who, even if he live, must be so aged that memory's seat is shaken."

"Shaken," said Judith, "but not destroyed. At times flashes will fall from memory's torch, and shed a vivid light on scenes long past."

"Seek him," said the bishop. "I know the man with whom we have to cope. 'Tis our last hope, and should it fail, and death becomes inevitable, remember that the priest is present for his office, and that heaven is near."

Judith required no second command, but hastened to the remote apartment of the venerable servitor, whose vast age had long disqualified him for all active service, but who had been retained to dream away the winter of his life beneath the roof of those whom he had so long and faithfully obeyed. The period of her absence, though short, appeared to the prelate and unhappy mother an age. Slight as was the chance of escape, the return of the faithful attendant, leading the seneschal, long since blind with age, was a relief that seemed to say all hope was not extinct.

"Where, where do you lead me?" fretfully exclaimed the old man, displeased at being taken from his favourite nook. "Why have you dragged me here? I passed the court; where am I? There used to be a step. Yes, yes—there used to be a step."

It was evident that he was endeavouring to recollect the spot to which Judith had conducted him, but that memory was struggling with the infirmities of age.

"Knowest thou where thou art?" demanded Herbert de Lozenga, in a soothing tone.

"No! no!" petulantly replied Hubert. "Who is it that questions me? Thine is no Saxon tongue. Lead me back, I pray. The air blows damp and chill, and my limbs tremble."

"Hopeless! hopeless!" said Edith, sinking on her chair. "His mind is gone—quite gone."

It was curious to mark the effect of Edith's voice. The old man trembled like an aspen leaf; its tone had awoken some long-forgotten echo in his heart. He had half-turned, as if to find his way back from whence he came, when its sound arrested him.

"Speak to him, lady," whispered the prelate. "He knows your voice best."

"Hubert," said the countess, advancing and taking his hand, "hast thou forgotten me?"

"I know, I know thee!" he exclaimed: "thou art my master's child. Lady, the oldest vassal of thy house would bend the knee before thee, but 'tis stiff with age."

"Hubert," said his agitated mistress, "danger besets my steps, and I must fly—fly from my father's roof."

The word "danger" seemed to restore the old man's faculties. Twice he endeavoured to erect his curbed limbs, like some worn war-steed, who heard the distant trumpet's clang, and thirsts for the fray.

"Danger!" he repeated. "What danger can assail our lady here? Shall I raise the banner of your house?" There was something affecting in the spirit of the old servitor, whose devotion had so long outlived his strength.

"No, Hubert, no," replied Edith. "Mine is a peril that must be met by flight. The times are changed, old man, and we must meet them. This was my grandsire's chamber," she added, "from whence I have heard there is a secret passage which leads beyond the moat—know'st thou of such?"

"Hush!" whispered the aged servitor; "there is such a passage. It—it—oh, memory, memory, do not desert me now!"

The speaker passed his thin, attenuated hand over his withered brow, to assist his broken recollections, his hearers gazing on him in anxious expectation.

"Where is it?" demanded Herbert de Lozenga, no longer able to keep silence.

The seneschal started at the sound of the prelate's voice; 'twas not the one he recognised. And, with the suspicion natural to the aged, he doggedly refused to answer him. It was some time before even Edith's voice could lead him to the subject.

"No, lady," he repeated, "there is no passage. I am old, but faithful. A stranger must not learn the secrets of your house—I have sworn to keep them—Hubert will guard his oath."

"Hubert!" exclaimed the countess, excited to desperation by the disappointment of her hopes, "I tell thee that I am beset with dangers—my life is in peril. Thou knowest the secret passage from this chamber; make one effort—recall one ray of memory to thine aid—do it, and save thy mistress from despair!" The speaker's tears fell fast upon his hands, which, in her agony she had taken.

"Despair!" he repeated, almost childishly, "and tears—my lady's tears! Then I must—I must. Give me a moment—where am I?"

"In my grandsire's chamber—the one in which he died."

"The panelled one?"

"The same," said Edith, making a signal that neither of her companions should speak, as it was evident that every voice but hers disturbed his recollection and excited his suspicion.

"Tell me, lady," he resumed "what is the hour of day?"

"'Tis night, Hubert—alas! 'tis night!" exclaimed his mistress, deeming from the question that his mind was becoming again a blank, and that the clue was for ever lost—"night, dark as my destiny!"

"Night! ah, true, true! Does the moon shine upon the oriel window?"

"It does—it does!" she replied, hope once more dawning at his question.

"When," resumed the old man "the shadow of the cross within your ancient shield falls on the oak-carved panels, then—then—your father, lady—but we are Normans now," and so again the old man's memory failed him, and he was wandering in a disjointed strain. An expression of childish apathy succeeded to the intelligence he had so lately displayed, and the last ray of recollection quitted him for ever.

Fortunately Herbert de Lozenga had caught every word he uttered. In the centre of the window to which he had alluded was a coat of arms of stained glass, the red cross in which, when struck by the rays of either the sun or moon, cast a broad shadow upon one of the rudely-carved panels in the wall. On a patient examination the prelate at length succeeded in discovering the spring, which was an iron leaf curiously concealed amidst the oaken foliage; it quickly yielded to the strong pressure of his eager hand, and the path of safety lay open to their view.

"The path is open," he exclaimed; "not a moment must be lost."

Judith hastily enveloped the agitated countess in a dark mantle, and prepared to follow her, when the heat, which had increased to a fearful extent in the apartment, and which, from the anxiety caused by their position, they had scarcely observed, burst into a flame; perhaps the current of fresh air which the opening of the secret passage admitted hastened the calamity.

"Heavens, the holm is in flames!" said Edith. "We cannot leave the old man to perish here; that were poor gratitude for faithful service: aid me to save him, father."

By their united efforts Hubert was led safe into the recesses of the passage, whose existence he had so miraculously disclosed, and there left till aid was sent to remove him. The three fugitives, after traversing the long, damp passage, emerged into a ruined hut, situated in the deepest recesses of the forest. The prelate cast his eyes around and recognised the abode of Haga, the Arch-Druid. Fortunately, he knew the country well, and a few hours' walk brought them to one of the numerous convents which owned his

spiritual sway. Shelter was instantly obtained, and a strict injunction for secrecy imposed on all its inmates.

"I can brave the world securely now," thought Herman, as the flames of Stanfield reddened in the night. "Edith, who scorned my love, hath proved at last my hate. The Norman priestling, too, who thought to crush me—I trample on his ashes. World," he added, with a scornful laugh, "we shall soon be quits. My debt is lessening."

The next day the rumour of the accidental destruction of Stanfield, and the death of Edith and Bishop Herbert, spread far and near. The good mourned their loss, and the evil triumphed in their fall.

The next morning Ernulf, the worthy squire of such a master as Herman, doffed his hauberk and helmet for the sober, peaceful dress of one of the lower order of franklins, and directed his steps towards the cathedral, where he was sure at all times to find the monks ready to receive their penitents, or to perform the varied ministry of their office.

Disguising his perfect knowledge of the Norman tongue, he demanded of one of the brotherhood to point out to him a confessional filled by some Saxon priest, and was, as he expected, directed to the one usually occupied by Father Oswald.

It was situated in one of those quiet, gloomy chapels at the back of the high altar, which the vandalism of the modern clergy has long since consigned to neglect; the light faintly penetrated through the richly-stained glass, softening, with its mellow tone, the harsh outlines of the sculptured saint, to whom its shrine was dedicated. The aged priest was in the act of shriving a penitent when the disguised murderer approached.

Despite his attire, and the hypocritical meekness of his look, Oswald recognised him, and instantly comprehended his purpose; but his courage did not fail him, or the danger which he ran cause his heart to beat with increased emotion. Sternly seated on his chair, he seemed like the impersonation of one of those fabled deities worshipped of old, his conscious power marked by his impassibility. Before he dismissed his kneeling penitent, he took from an ebony and silver box which hung beside him a small phial, which he placed under his sandalled foot, so that he could crush it by the slightest pressure, and placed a morsel of some highly-perfumed drug within his mouth.

As soon as they were left alone within the chapel—Ernulf and the priest—the former advanced towards the confessional, his eyes bent in seeming humility to the ground, but in reality to hide the ferocious joy which the anticipation of blood gave to their expression. His knee was sacrilegiously bent to the earth even at the moment his hand secretly grasped the weapon concealed beneath his flowing cloak.

"What brings the parricide and sacrilegious robber to the tribunal of penitence?" demanded Oswald, his aged eyes flashing with holy indignation on the prostrate man. "Is it to commit some new crime? Is not his soul stained with blood enough already?"

Had a thunderbolt fallen at the feet of the detected Ernulf, he could not have been more surprised. The being whom he came to strike seemed armed with omniscience to confound him. The secret terror of his life, the sin which haunted him, his nightly dream—his daily curse—rose, as it were, in evidence against him. His craven heart beat wildly at the words.

"Parricide!" he murmured, faintly.

"Aye, how else," demanded Oswald, "name ye those who shed a parent's blood? Have so many years elapsed that thou hast forgot the deed—so many tears of penitence been shed, it has effaced the stain? Fool!" he added, "should thy life be long and wearisome as mine, and every minute of it be a prayer or tear, it would not cleanse thy hand. A father's blood is on it—his dying malediction on thy soul!"

Ernulf, overwhelmed with confusion, could only faintly exclaim—

"Mercy! mercy!"

"Mercy!" iterated the priest; "where was thy mercy when he clung to thee, with his white hair dyed in gore, and his dying eyes, in mingled love and horror, fixed upon thee? Mercy! Ask it of the fiends," he continued, "who registered thy crime; ask it of thy father's bones, which, at the archangel's trumpet's sound, shall rise up in judgment against thee—ask it of the innocent blood which thou hast shed, the purity which thou hast violated, the homes which thou hast rendered desolate, but ask it not of me. Minister of justice, as well as mercy, I close the book of life against thee, and pronounce anathema to thy despairing soul."

The voice of the old man was firm as the denouncing angel's curse when it swept over the Cities of the Plain. The appalled Ernulf, confronted with his crime, knew not which way to flee—terror took possession of his heart—hell seemed yawning beneath him—and the strong ruffian rolled in agony at his accuser's feet.

"And now," continued Oswald, "thou wouldst add sacrilege to murder—for base, filthy hire profane the holy sacrament of Penance, insult the indignant saints before their altars, and strike their minister before their shrine!"

"Art thou a devil, thus to read men's hearts?" demanded Ernulf, rage and shame gradually mastering his terror.

"Enough, I can read thine," said Oswald. "Aye, grasp thy weapon," he continued, as he witnessed the movement of the squire's hand beneath his cloak. "I fear it not. Thou art delivered to me—the worm beneath my foot is not more hurtless than thy toothless malice."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Ernulf, casting a deep glance around, to

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY

1215 EAST 58TH STREET

CHICAGO, ILL. 60637

TEL: 733-7321

1968

1969

1970

1971

1972

MASKS AND FACES.

ILLUSTRATED BY

Sir JOHN GILBERT, R.A.

ORDER

LONDON JOURNAL

(No. 216),

NOW PUBLISHING.

In which is commenced the Celebrated Story, entitled ;

MASKS AND FACES.

This famous work, full of startling incidents and original and dramatic situations, enthral the reader from the first line to the last. The fortunes of the principal characters will be followed with undiminished interest to the end, and cannot fail to attract readers of all ages and both sexes.

* * We cannot too strongly urge upon our readers to recommend all their friends who have not hitherto done so, to take this favourable opportunity of subscribing to the LONDON JOURNAL.

MINNIGREY.

By J. F. SMITH.

EVERY LOVER OF FICTION SHOULD BUY THIS WORLD-RENOWNED STORY. Price 2s. in Picture Boards.

The popularity of this wonderful Romance has been proved by the fact that it has been translated into all the principal languages of Europe, and the same may be said of

WOMAN AND HER MASTER,

The most Successful Periodical Story ever Written, by the same Author.
Now ready, price 2s. in Picture Boards.

London : BRADLEY and CO., 12, and 13, FETTER LANE, E.C.